

spirit of the Senate. And that's what America needs: the right spirit.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Delaine Eastin, California superintendent of public instruction.

Remarks at Mar Vista Elementary School in Los Angeles, California June 23, 1997

The President. Thank you. I thought Mary Mendez did a good job for a parent and not a professional speaker, didn't you? Give her a hand. [Applause]

Hello!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. It's wonderful to be back in California and to be here in Los Angeles and to be here in this terrific neighborhood at this great school. Thank you very much for having me here. Thank you, Mayor Riordan, for your good work and your kind remarks.

I want to thank my Small Business Administrator, Aida Alvarez, who's here with me today. She's been speaking to the LULAC convention. But I brought her here to emphasize another passionate feeling of mine, and that is that we have to give every American a chance to live up to his or her God-given abilities. Aida Alvarez is the first American of Puerto Rican descent ever to be in a President's Cabinet. So I thought I would bring her today, and I'm glad she's here.

Thank you, David Lawrence and Dr. Sharon Levine, for your great citizenship. And thank you, Doris Palacio, for the wonderful work you do here at this school. I'm very, very proud of you, thank you. I want to thank the people from Children's Now, the parents, the students, and the teachers at Mar Vista.

Now, you know what we're here to talk about. Too many children all across America, too many children here in California, some children in this crowd today don't have health insurance. We are here today because Kaiser Permanente is going to make a major change in that for you in California. We want to congratulate them, but even more important, we ought to be here to resolve to do better and not to rest until every child in America has an appropriate health insurance policy and adequate health care when they need it.

The hard truth is that while America has the highest health care quality in the world, in many ways too many Americans don't have access to the best the system has to offer. You heard the good doctor outlining it. Today, over 10 million American children, over 1.6 million of them here in California, don't have health insurance. Do you know what that means? That means nearly 40 percent of the uninsured children don't get the annual checkups they need and may not find those holes in the heart or lead problems or other problems. It means one in four uninsured children don't even have a regular doctor. It means too many children who have trouble seeing a blackboard don't get the glasses they need to correct their vision; that too many nagging coughs go untreated until they worsen into more serious conditions that may require costly treatments and lengthy hospital stays later; that too many parents actually face the agonizing and impossible choice between buying medicine for a sick child or food for the rest of their family. We must do better, and we can.

Our economy is the strongest in the world. In the last 4 years we've become the number one exporter again, we've produced over 12 million jobs, we have the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, and we are still the only advanced industrial country in the world that does not provide health insurance for every single one of its working families. It is wrong, and we have to do better.

It is true, as you have heard, that a number of children are actually covered by law under State programs like MediCal, and for some reason their parents either don't know or don't believe they can access the program. We have to do better. But it's also true that nearly one-sixth of us simply don't have health insurance. I tried hard to enact a plan that would give all American working families health insurance,

and it's well known I failed. But I'm not ashamed that I tried.

So after we did, we sort of rolled up our sleeves and decided we had to try again in a different way. And we decided to try to go at this step by step. Last year we passed a law which says that families can't automatically lose their health insurance when the parent changes jobs or when somebody in the family has been sick. We've begun to make it easier for people who are self-employed to buy affordable health insurance. And we have supported efforts in States all across the country to use the Medicaid program or, in this case, the MediCal program, to try to expand coverage to working families that don't have insurance through the workplace.

We recently had a Presidents' Summit of Service in Philadelphia in which I said that the era of big Government may be over but the era of big challenges is not, and that citizens and Government had to do more to work together to give every child a fair chance at living out his or her dreams. And we said there are five things that we ought to do. One, give every child a safe place to grow up. That's one of the things that I talked to the mayors about, doing more to keep our kids out of trouble and keep our streets and our schools safe and drug free. Two, give all of our children world-class education, put computers in all the classrooms, teach all the kids to read, open the doors of college education to all young people. We can do that. I'm proud of the fact that this balanced budget agreement I reached with Congress, in addition to what it does on health care, has the biggest increase in Federal support for education in over 30 years. And we are going to pass it and bring it here to the schools of California. The fourth thing we promised to do was to do everything we can to see that every child in this country has a mentor. And we're doing our part there, trying to mobilize through AmeriCorps volunteers a million people to help make sure all of our kids can read, whatever their native tongue, read independently by the time they're in the third grade, so they can do well and go on and create a good future for themselves.

And we said that every child should have a healthy start in life, something all citizens must take responsibility for. That's what Kaiser has done. Again I say, I cannot thank Kaiser enough, not only for doing this but for challenging other people in the same line of business to do the

same thing, 50,000 kids here, 50,000 there, pretty soon you're talking about a lot of families with healthy children. And we've got to do that.

But even as Kaiser does its part—you heard what they said, one of the things they're going to do—how are they going to get 50,000 kids insured every year with \$20 million a year? That's \$400 a child. That's less than most of you can buy health insurance for. How are they going to do that? They're going to get more kids in the existing MediCal system; they're going to work out partnerships; they're going to work out sliding fee arrangements, so that people who can afford to pay something but not the ongoing commercial rates can pay what they can afford to pay. A lot of families would gladly do that if they could just get some insurance coverage.

And what does that mean? That means that Government has to do its part, too. Telling citizens they have a responsibility will never relieve the Government of its responsibility to work with citizens who are doing the very best they can to make us one country where everybody's got a chance to raise healthy children.

So I want all of you to know that the balanced budget agreement that I reached with the leaders of Congress and that passed with overwhelming bipartisan majorities in both Houses includes the largest investment in children's health care since the Medicaid program was enacted in 1965, the largest investment in over 30 years, designed to bring to millions and millions of children health insurance coverage that they don't have, to work with companies like Kaiser Permanente, to work with States, to work with local communities to make sure that we do not leave these children and their families behind. And we have certain standards.

That budget agreement is now being written into law, and here's what we're trying to do. First of all, the coverage ought to be meaningful. It ought to cover everything from check-ups to surgery so that children get the care they need. Second, we ought to make sure that coverage is affordable. People who can pay something ought to pay it, but they ought to be able to buy affordable health insurance. If people are out there working full-time and doing the best they can, they ought to be able to have the dignity of knowing that they can take care of their children. People should be able to succeed at home and succeed at work in the same way. And the third thing—and I don't

expect—this won't concern a lot of you, but for people like Dr. Lawrence and me, it's a big headache—we've got to make sure that this money actually goes to uninsured children. We cannot simply see the money replacing money that already goes from Government or from private insurance or from charities to health insurance. We have to draw this bill in a way that this new money actually insures more children. And I want you to know, we're going to work hard to do all those things.

Let me just say to the young children here, you are growing up in a very hopeful time for America. Our economy is the healthiest in a generation. Crime and welfare are down. America is the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity.

We have two great challenges—we have many, but there are two great challenges. First, look around this crowd today. The first is the one I talked about in San Diego just 9 days ago. We have got to prove that we can be the first truly equal, fair, harmonious, multiracial democracy in history. We have got to prove that we can do that. And the second thing we have to do is to make sure every child has a chance to live out his or her dreams. We cannot leave any of our children behind in physical isolation because they don't have decent health care, or

their streets aren't safe, or their schools aren't adequate. We can't—we can't—afford that.

And this health care initiative today is very important, not only because of the children that will be covered, not only because of the challenge that others will have to meet, not only because of the energy it puts behind what we're trying to do in the Congress for millions of children but because it makes a statement about what it means to be an American on the edge of the 21st century. We're not going to leave our children behind. That's what this is about.

So again I say, thank you to the educators; thank you to the health providers; thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thanks to all of you. Remember what we're here for today. If your child needs health insurance, try to get him in this initiative. But as a citizen, don't give up until every child in America has the health care that he or she deserves.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:08 p.m. on the playground. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Mendez, who introduced the President; Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles; David Lawrence, chief executive officer and chairman, Kaiser Permanente; Sharon Levine, leader of the Kaiser Permanente pediatric unit; and school principal Doris Palacio.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision on Federal Funds for Educational Programs

June 23, 1997

I am pleased with the Supreme Court's decision today which will raise educational standards for children across America. For the last 10 years, school districts have been barred from providing title I supplemental remedial educational programs to parochial school students in their classrooms. These special programs, which supplement the school's base curriculum, provide remedial education to students who need more than the standard school day provides.

My administration sought to overturn this unfair restriction. The Court's decision explicitly accepts the position put forth by Solicitor General Walter Dellinger, representing Secretary of

Education Richard Riley, that federally funded supplemental education programs may be provided to students of both public and parochial schools without running afoul of the principle of separation of church and state. No longer will children have to leave their school buildings in order to get the assistance they need.

Because of today's ruling, all schoolchildren, whether in public or private schools, can benefit equally from the important supplemental remedial programs of title I.